

Keith Gabert

2024 Inductee - Builder/Sportsperson Category



In 1983, Keith Gabert, who was Vice President of Rutland Minor Fastball, recommended to that Association that they approach the City of Kelowna to give them a lease on an 11 acre piece of rough land adjacent to the airport and now known as Kiwanis High Noon Park. The City was approached and the lease was granted for \$1.00 a year. Over the years Keith coached all 4 of his daughters.

Keith Gabert then became President of Rutland Minor Fastball and started the ball rolling on developing the fields. This man had the vision and foresight to see what this could become. Up until this time, the girls played on elementary school fields.



Keith Gabert cajoled friends and strangers to form a committee of volunteers to approach firms in the City for donations and help get this facility built. The first year they burned the piece of land to get rid of the overgrowth. During the years, Keith and his four daughters put in thousands of hours, as well as many other volunteers in preparing the land. Firms volunteered heavy equipment to level the land. By 1988, they were ready to commence building fences, facilities and buying equipment. Keith was the one person handling all the bids and making recommendations to the Board of Rutland Minor Fastball. There were many other people involved in assisting the building of these 4 fields and securing donations to help pay for the construction of the fields and purchasing of equipment, but Keith was the driving force and the fields would not have been built without him. The large shed was built for the equipment, umpires meeting room, washrooms, office and concession.

In 1992, Rutland Minor Fastball asked Softball BC for Provincials to be held in Kelowna and were granted the Pee-Wee B Provincials. The diamonds were not ready nor was the concession. In the spring of 1992, volunteers worked 24-7 to get the diamonds ready in time for the Provincials. As the concession was not ready, they cooked hamburgers on a BBQ for the players and parents.

The Kiwanis and Light Company were two of the major contributors in the construction of this field and the Kiwanis named the field Kiwanis High Noon Park. The park was built by volunteers from Rutland Minor Fastball, and many firms without a cost to the City. Rutland Minor Fastball and now Kelowna Minor Fastball maintain the irrigation system,

Keith Gabert

2024 Inductee - Builder/Sportsperson Category



fields and building maintenance. Two more diamonds were constructed in the early 2000's and in or around 2006-07 Kelowna Minor Fastball took over the park.

Thanks to the vision and hours of time by Keith Gabert and Rutland Minor Fastball, High Noon Park is one of the pristine ball parks in the Province inviting teams from Alberta, Vancouver Island, Lower Mainland, Far North and the Kootenays in 6 tournaments a year, plus a Provincial Championship. Kelowna Minor Fastball now consists of 21 minor girls teams ranging from 7-9 years old to 19 years old playing out of High Noon Park on 6 diamonds with two more backstops already up and ready to cut out two more diamonds.

This was the vision of Keith Gabert. This \$1.00 lease continues to date.